

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-04 SP-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5726

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2650

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS

SUBJECT: SENATOR MATHIAS' MEETING WITH PERES

(THIS MESSAGE HAS NOT BEEN CLEARED BY SENATOR MATHIAS.)

SUMMARY: PERES INDICATED ISRAEL WOULD BE PREPARED TO GO TO GENEVA WHERE, DESPITE DANGERS SUCH AS THE WAR OPTION, HE FORSEES A CHANCE FOR NEGOTIATION. SUCCESS WILL ONLY COME THROUGH QUIET AND PATIENT DIPLOMACY. EXPECTATIONS MUST NOT BE RAISED TOO HIGH. SENATOR MATHIAS SAID THERE WAS A CHANGING ATTITUDE IN THE U.S. TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM, WHICH COULD AFFECT OUR WILLINGNESS TO GIVE AID OF THE SAME MAGNITUDE IN THE YEARS TO COME. PERES THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE A SHIFT IN THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST AS A RESULT OF ITS REQUIREMENT FOR ADDITIONAL ENERGY SOURCES. ISRAEL WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE WITH KING HUSSEIN BY KEEPING THE BORDER QUIET AND THE BRIDGES OPEN. END SUMMARY

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1. SHIMON PERES RECEIVED SENATOR MATHIAS ON APRIL 14. THE SENATOR WAS ACCCOMPANIED BY THE CHARGE AND FSO ARTHUR HOUGHTON. MOSHE RAVIV WAS PRESENT ON THE ISRAELI SIDE.

2. PERES BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE HAD BEEN "GREATLY IMPRESSED" BY THE SENATOR'S RECENT PROPOSAL FOR A CO-

OPERATIVE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI NUCLEAR PROJECT IN THE SINAI.
THE SENATOR SAID THAT HE REALIZED THAT THIS WAS SOMETHING FOR THE FUTURE, THAT "WE MUST DREAM A LITTLE."
PERES SAID HE FULLY AGREED AND RECALLED THAT A SIMILAR PROJECT HAD ONCE BEEN SUGGESTED TO PRESIDENT EISENHOWER BY ADMIRAL STRAUSS WHEN HE WAS HEAD OF THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE SENATOR'S PROPOSAL HAD BEEN GUILT ON THAT, AND THE SENATOR NODDED CONFERENCE.

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3. SENATOR MATHIAS ASKED HOW PERES NOW VIEWED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL. PERES SAID THAT HE HAD NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT THE INTENTIONS OF PRESIDENT CARTER: "FOR YOU HE COMES FROM THE SOUTH; FOR US HE COMES FROM THE BIBLE." THE REAL PROBLEM, THE MINISTER SAID, WAS HOW NOT TO LOSE THE PROSPECTS FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST ON THE ONE HAND, AND ON THE OTHER HOW NOT TO BECOME THE VICTIM OF IMPATIENCE IN REACHING A SOLUTION. BOTH THE ARABS AND THE ISRAELIS HAVE PROBLEMS AND IT WILL NOT BE SIMPLE TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THEM. ISRAEL IS NOT GOING TO NEGOTIATE IN ORDER TO ACQUIRE ANOTHER 100 MILES OF TERRITORY, BUT IT ALWAYS MUST RECALL THAT AT ITS NARROWEST IT IS ONLY NINE MILES WIDE (IN THE 1967 BORDERS) AND THIS CAN BE A SOURCE OF INSTABILITY. HE NOTED THAT THERE IS A DANGER IN THE FACT THAT THE ARABS HAVE A GREAT NUMBER OF TANKS, MANY MORE THAN ISRAEL AND, IN FACT, ALMOST 2,000 MORE THAN THE U.S. THIS GAVE ISRAEL CAUSE TO WORRY
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ABOUT ITS SAFETY AND EXISTENCE. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR PRESTIGE THE ARABS WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE PEACE. ISRAEL, HE EMPHASIZED, WAS READY FOR PEACE AND WAS WILLING TO MAKE TERRITORIAL COMPROMISES. SOME OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES WERE ALSO READY FOR PEACE BUT NOT FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE. ISRAEL SHOULD NOT JEOPARDIZE ITS FRIENDSHIP BY BECOMING A BURDEN ON THE U.S. IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASSURE ITS OWN SECURITY: "GOD FORBID THAT AN AMERICAN SOLDIER EVER BE KILLED HERE!"

4. DESPITE THESE PROBLEMS, PERES SAID, HE BELIEVES THERE IS A CHANCE FOR NEGOTIATION AND THAT ISRAEL SHOULD BE PREPARED TO GO TO A CONFERENCE IN GENEVA. HE WISHED THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO MEET FACE TO FACE WITH PRESIDENT SADAT BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THAT IF HE COULD GO OVER A MAP WITH THE EGYPTIAN LEADER HE WOULD BE ABLE TO GET THE LATTER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ISRAEL WANTED. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, PERES SAID,

MOST AGREEMENTS ARE REACHED IN WHAT AMERICANS CALL A "BULL SESSION." HE WAS PREPARED TO SEE ISRAEL GO TO GENEVA PROVIDED THE GROUND HAD BEEN WELL PREPARED, EVEN IF THIS ENTAILED SOME DELAY. IT WAS NECESSARY TO PREPARE THE GROUND CAREFULLY BECAUSE A FAULURE AT GENEVA WOULD BE SERIOUS, SINCE A MILITARY OPTION IS AVAILABLE. HE BELIEVED THAT A CONFERENCE COULD START IN THE LATTER HALF OF 1977. AFTER THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS IT WOULD PROBABLY TAKE A COUPLE OF MONTHS TO HAMMER TOGETHER A COALITION. IN RESPONSE TO THE SENATOR'S QUESTION, PERES SAID THAT HE FORESAW THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE READY IN THE LATE SUMMER OR EQRLY FALL FOR GENEVA.

5. THE SENATOR SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE MOST DANGEROUS WORD WHICH MIGHT COME BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE U.S. WOULD BE "INTRASIGENCE." IF EITHER COUNTRY VIEWED

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THE OTHER AS BEING TOO INTRANSIGENT, THIS COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE PRESENT CLOSE RELATIONSHIP.

6. PERES COMMENTED THAT THE LABOR PARTY PLATFORM HAD BEEN CHANGED SOMEWHAT. HE POINTED OUT THE PREVIOUSLY IT HAD NOT SPELLED OUT THE PARTY'S WILLINGNESS TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON THE WEST BANK. THIS,HE SAID, SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT ISRAEL WOULD SERIOUSLY LIKE TO NEGOTIATE.

7. SENATOR MATHIAS SAID THAT HE SAW CHANGES IN THE U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST AS RESULTING FROM SEVERAL CAUSES: (A) AN ARAB ASSAULT ON PUBLIC OPINION WHICH HAS HAD SOME SUCCESS IN MODERATING AMERICAN VIEWS ABOUT THE ARAB WORLD; (B) THE CONTINUING EFFECTS OF THE ENERGY CRISIS, WHICH WILL SHORTLY BE HIGH-LIGHTED FOR PUBLIC OPINION BY THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM ON ENERGY ONSERVATION; AND (C)THE GROWING FEELING IN CONGRESS THAT HELP TO ISRAEL ON THE PRESENT SCALE MAY NOT BE SUSTAINABLE FOR A LONG PERIOD. THIS DID NOT MEAN THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL ON INTENTS AND GOALS, BUT THERE WAS CONCERN ABOUT OUR ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO HELP AT THE SAME MAGNITUDE.

8. PERES SAID HE THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE SOME CHANGE COMING IN THE ENERGY SITUATION, NOW THAT THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE UNABLE TO SATISFY ALLTHEIR REQUIREMENTS FROM THEIR OWN RESOURCES. IF THEYWOULD HAVE TO IMPORT MIDDLE EAST OIL IN THE FUTURE, THIS COULD BE A HELPFUL DEVELOPMENT AS IT WOULD GIVE THEM A COMMON INTEREST

WITH THE INDUSTRIALIZED WEST. HE HIMSELF WAS INCLINED
TO BELIEVE THAT THE EVIDENT DISSATISFACTION WITH
CONDITIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE HAD MORE TO DO WITH THE
FAILURE OF COMMUNISM AS AN ECONOMIC DOCTRINE THAN IT
DID WITH ITS FAILURE AS A MORAL PHILOSOPHY. ALSO HE
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WAS NOT SURE THAT THE SOVIETS WERE AS CONVINCED AS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2650

THEY PROFESSED TO BE THAT INFLATION IN THE WESTERN
WORLD IS TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. ALTHOUGH THEY WILL NOT
CHANGE THEIR BASIC GOALS WE MAY BE SEEING A SLIGHT
CHANGE IN THEIR APPROACH. THEY HAVE NOT HAD GREAT
SUCCESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN RECENT YEARS. IF THEIR
POLICY SHOULD BE CHANGING THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL BECAUSE
IT WOULD PROBABLY MEAN A MOVE AWAY FROM THE WAR OPTION.

9. PERS CONTINUED THAT, GIVEN THESE FACTORS, IT WAS
IMPORTANT THAT WE NOT RAISE EXPECTATIONS IF THEY CANNOT
BE FULFILLED. THIS COULD BE WORSE THAN THE INTRANSIGENCE
THE SENATOR HAD MENTIONED. "LET'S NEGOTIATE

BETTER THAN WE PROMISE, RATHER THAN PROMISE BETTER
THAN WE NEGOTIATE*"THIS LED HIM AGAIN TO THE BELIEF
THAT THE MOVEMENT TOWARD GENEVA MUST BE CAREFULLY
PREPARED BY QUIET DIPLOMACY. ISRAEL WILL NOT BARGAIN,
HE SAID, IT WILL NEGOTIATE. BUT IT WILL NOT
NEGOTIATE IN A MANNER SO AS TO ENDANGER ISRAEL. FOR
HIS PART HE WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE U.S. POSITION ON
NEGOTIATIONS, ALTHOUGH HE DOES SEE SOME DIFFERENCES
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EN ROUTE TO OUR COMMON GOAL OF PEACE.

10. SENATOR MATHIAS SAID HE AGREED ENTIRELY THAT
NEGOTIATING CANNOT BE DONE IN ADVANCE IN THE NEWSPAPERS.

1. PERES SAID THAT THE ISRAELIS KNOW THEY HAVE AN
OPTION OF WAR. ISRAEL WAS GOING TO NEGOTIATE NOT
BECAUSE THEIR AMERICAN FRIENDS WANTED THEM TO,
BUT BECAUSE THEYNEED PEACE. THE SENATOR AGREED,
ADDING: "IT IS YOUR LIVES!"

12. PERES SAID HE WANTED IT UNDERSTOOD THAT IN HIS
VIEW THERE WAS NO REPLACEMENT FOR THE U.S. IN THE
PEACEMAKING MISSION. NO OTHER COUNTRY COULD SUB-
STITUTE FOR WHAT THE U.S. WAS DOING.

13. AFTER A SHORT EXCHANGE ABOUT EGYPT'S GREAT ECONOMIC
DIFFICULTIES, THE SENATOR ASKEDHOW PERES SAW THE
SITUATION DEVELOPING IN JORDAN IN THE YEARS TO COME.
THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT IF JORDAN REMAINED INDEPENDENT,
HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE STABLE. IF THE WEST BANKERS
WERE GIVEN THE CHOICE BETWEEN A DICTATOR AND A
KING THEY WOULD ALWAYS CHOOSE A KING, CERTAINLY A
SUCCESSFUL ONE LIKE HUSSEIN. THEKING HAS CREATED AN
ARMY WHICH IS "NOT BAD" AND IS BASICALLY LOYAL TO HIM.
HE HAS MAINTAINED RELATIVE ECONOMIC STABILITY. JORDAN
DOES, HOWEVER,FACE THREE DANGERS AS PERES SAW IT:
(A) A TEMPTATIONTO JOIN FORCES WITHOTHER ARAB
COUNTRIES, WHERE JORDAN WILL ALWAYS BE THE EAKER
PARTNER; (B) ASSASSINATION OF THE ROYAL FAMILY AND A
TAKEOVER OF JORDAN BY THE PLO, A FATE FROM WHICH THE
KING'S COURAGE AND LUCK HAS SAVED HIM UNTILNOW; AND
(C) TOO MUCH DEPENDENCE ON THEMILITARY ASPECT AND
A NEGLECT OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

14. PERES SAID THAT THE KING'S BROTHER HASSAN HAS SOME
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GOOD ECONOMIC PLANS. SEVERAL OF THESE WILL REQUIRE COOPERATION WITH ISRAEL AND THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY IN WORKING THIS OUT. ISRAEL WILL SUPPORT THE KING AS MUCH AS IT CAN BY KEEPING THE BORDER QUIET AND THE BRIDGES OPEN. PERES SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THE KING DID NOT WANT ISRAEL TO GIVE UP THE WEST BANK TO THE PLO.

15. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH RELAXED AND GRACIOUS IN MANNER, PERES APPEARED TIRED AND HAD A SLIGHT COUGH. (THIS WOULD BE ONLY NATURAL AFTER THE STRAIN HE HAD BEEN THROUGH IN THE LAST WEEK.) HE EXPLAINED TO THE SENATOR THAT FOR FOUR DAYS AND FOUR NIGHTS HE HAD BEEN LIVING THROUGH A HURRICANE, AND HE WAS VISIBLY PLEASED AT THE SENATOR'S COMMENT THAT THE RESULTS OF THE LABOR PARTY'S ORDEAL HAD SHOWN ITS INNER STRENGTH AND COLLECTIVE WILL.

16. ON SUBSTANCE, PERES' VIEWS DID NOT APPEAR PARTICULARLY HAWKISH. THEY SEEMED TO BE MORE THE "REASONABLE" POSITIONS OF A MAN WHO WANTS TO BE PRIME MINISTER RATHER THAN THOSE OF AN INTRANSIGENT. HIS IDEAS ON THE GENEVA PROCESS ARE COMING INTO SHARPER FOCUS: THOROUGH PREPARATION, QUIET DIPLOMACY, AND (HOPEFULLY) FACT-TO-FACE MEETINGS WITH THE ARABS, PARTICULARLY THE EGYPTIANS. HIS WILLINGNESS TO GIVE UP TERRITORY ON THE WEST BANK IN KEEPING WITH HIS PARTY'S PLATFORM WAS ALSO CLEAR BUT THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF WHAT THIS MIGHT COMPRIZE. NOR WAS THERE ANY MENTION OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY. THESE ARE THE HARD QUESTIONS WHICH WILL CERTAINLY REQUIRE THE MOST CAREFUL AND THOROUGH PREPARATION OF WHICH HE SPOKE.

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Message Attributes

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